

Media Release

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Quarantine findings go beyond horse flu

The NSW Farmers' Association commends the Federal Government for adopting all of the recommendations of Commissioner Callinan's report into the Equine Influenza Outbreak.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says the Association agrees with the majority of the recommendations and feels confident that they will address the specific problems identified in the inquiry regarding horse importation.

"We are especially pleased with the increased focus on verifying certification done by off shore agencies and checking the biosecurity of off shore quarantine premises," Mr Laurie said.

"The Association is however disappointed that there are no stipulations that key supervisory and decision making positions are to be filled by veterinarians," he said.

Mr Laurie says the Association appreciates that potential changes to horse quarantine staff structure may have been referred to the Beale Quarantine and Biosecurity Review as part of a broader assessment of the entire quarantine system, across all importation risks.

"The Association has a long held position that there are fundamental flaws with Australia's quarantine system which can only be fixed by moving quarantine from a government department to an appropriately designed statutory authority," Mr Laurie said.

"An appropriately designed statutory authority will deliver the cultural change needed to improve not only horse quarantine but reduce the risk from all importations," he said.

"Hopefully Mr Beale will now assess whether the failings in AQIS and Biosecurity Australia identified by Commissioner Callinan might be broader than horse importations and whether the recommendations accepted by the Government can also include importations of other commodities.

"Such a move would benefit us all - livestock and plant industries require the integrity of Australia's pest and disease free status for both domestic and international markets," Mr Laurie concluded.

The NSW Farmers' Association has lodged submissions to both the Callinan and Beale inquiries.

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